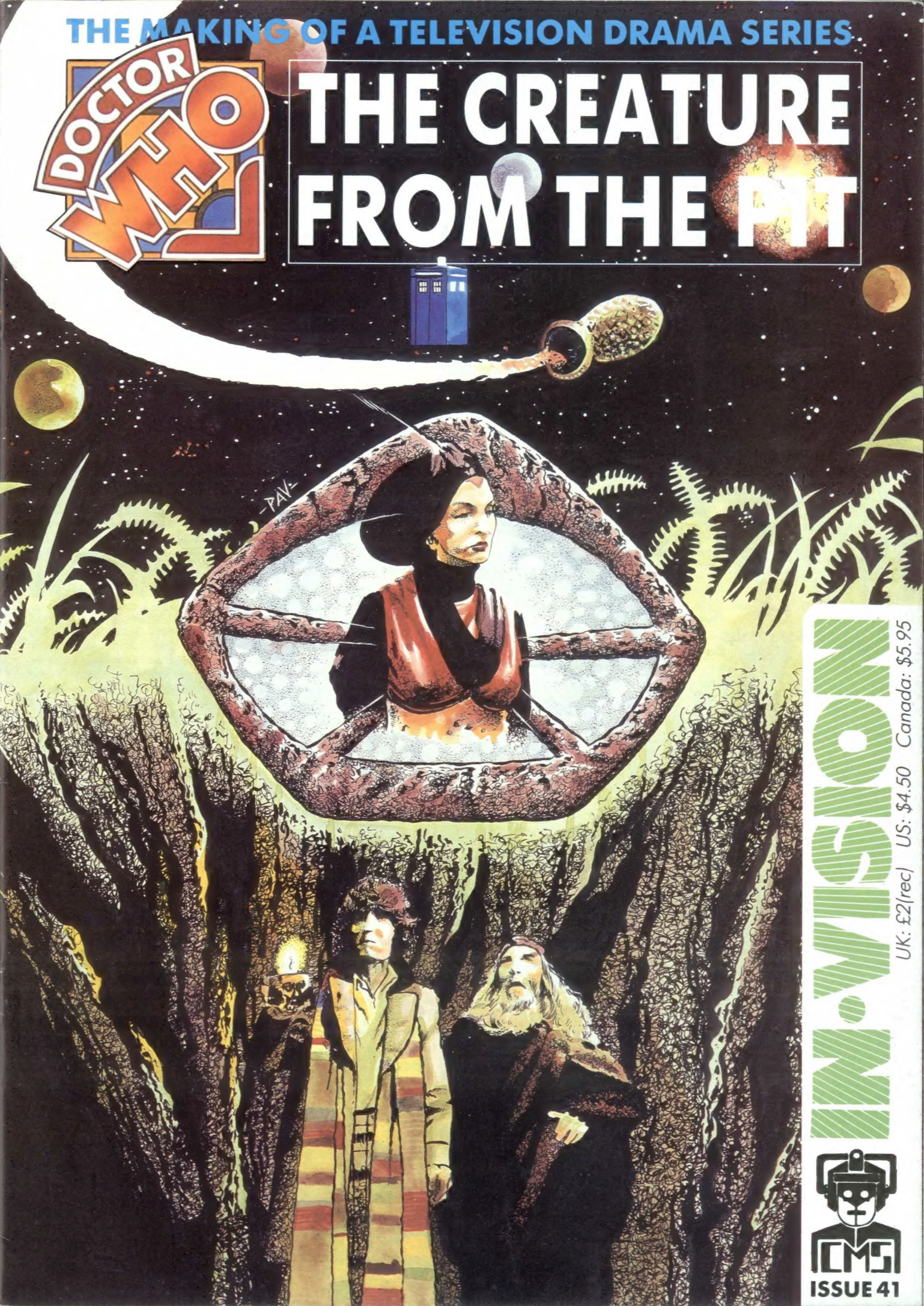
THE MAKING OF A TELEVISION DRAMA SERIES

DOCTOR WHO

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT



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THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT is remembered for one thing - the Creature itself. The other elements of the story are largely successful.

The scripts are witty (as Peter Linford points out in his review), and were some of David Fisher's favourite work for *Doctor Who*. "I was asked to introduce a different type of monster," he said in an interview in 1980. "I thought it would be nice to write a good - or at least disinterested - monster."

The production values in the main are high - the lighting and costume design in particular are worthy of mention. But the exception is the over-ambitious effects work - which disappointed David Fisher enough for him to write the Target Novelisation to "explain what was meant to happen." We shall examine the novel in more depth in *IN•VISION issue 45 - Season Seventeen.*

Talking exclusively to *IN•VISION*, director Christopher Barry and Visual Effects Designer Mat Irvine relive some painful memories of the low points in their *Who* careers. They try to explain how a single effect went so wrong, and why this has condemned an otherwise creditable production to be remembered as one of the worst stories of Tom Baker's tenure as the Doctor. □

Origins

ALTHOUGH screened as story three THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT was the first story of Season 17 to go into production, and hence the one with the most input from outgoing Script-Editor Anthony Read who had commissioned the story in the autumn of 1978 - about the same time *Gamble with Time* was given the go-ahead from the same writer, David Fisher (see last issue).

Both stories followed Graham Williams' wish to veer away from "galactic Time Lord sagas" this year and return to a more basic level of story-telling. Having had the Doctor save the history of time from universal Armageddon the last two years, he was looking for more locally-based, people-oriented material for Season 17 to avoid the risk of the Doctor seeming to become too omnipotent. Another dictate he laid down was to steer clear of resolving the issue with the Guardians and the Key to Time. The Randomiser was perceived only as a means of restoring the Doctor's original habit of wandering into situations by accident, rather than going somewhere by design or in response to a distress call.

Right from the start Fisher's story bore no other title than THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT. Indeed an in-joke, which was later worked into the dialogue, was to emphasise **Doctor Who**'s predilection for story titles loaded with "the"s and "of"s.

A full set of rehearsal scripts was ready by the time Douglas Adams took over from Read, but at that point there was some debate as to whether the show would go out as first, second or third in broadcast order. Right up until March 1979 the Production Office was giving out Press releases announcing PIT would be second after DESTINY OF THE DALEKS. □

Script

THE STORY was entirely David Fisher's creation and followed his own preference for writing strong female characters. Originally the main villainess was called Adastra. This was later suggested as a change to Adrasta by Douglas Adams to avoid her Latin roots being too obvious.

At the time of writing Fisher had as little idea as Graham Williams that Mary Tamm would be leaving the series, and so wrote for her somewhat aloof and haughty portrayal of Romana rather than Lalla Ward's gentler, more impish personality.

The early delivery date of these scripts suggests that Graham Williams never got further than discussion stage with his idea of replacing a permanent Romana actress with a regenerated guest female lead each story. Robert Holmes and Philip Hinchcliffe had thought along similar lines before Leela was cast, but had dismissed the notion as a laborious overhead on the scripting. Douglas Adams likewise was against such a precedent, arguing they would quickly run out of reasons why Romana would want to regenerate before each new serial. □

Characters

Adrasta

THE PETTY power cravings of this pathetic woman endanger a whole world. She would condemn her own subjects to subsistence living just to remain in control of her part of Chloris.

She realises and exploits the power of women in her world, and surrounds herself with weak men who she can bully or ignore. The exception is the devoted Karela, who is constantly on guard for her mistress' safety, who would take a knife and kill for her, but who is also largely ignored by Adrasta. In general, there are two types of people who Adrasta knows: those who disobeyed her, and those who are still alive. And the latter are mostly on borrowed time.

It was an enormous stroke of luck for her that Erato came to negotiate the metal/chlorophyll deal with her. She foolishly did not exploit this by expanding her mining operation into an import/export business, and instead tricked the ambassador into falling down her mine - thus making it inoperable, and giving her the problem of managing a finite amount of metal on Chloris.

Similarly, she now does not see the true potential of the TARDIS, identifying it only as a way of correcting her earlier mistake and bringing more metal to Chloris - a parochial use of such an opportunity.

However, if she did make the mistake of not killing Erato when he arrived, she cleverly turned it to advantage: being thrown to the Creature in the Pit is a more terrifying prospect than a conventional execution, and she has built a whole ceremony around it over fifteen years.

Adrasta is vain, cunning, capable of personal violence (she savagely slaps Romana into submission), and patronising ("don't interrupt, dear").

She is also dangerously close to insanity. When her authority is challenged by more off-worlders, she tries to exert it by increasingly manic demands and unexpected reversed decisions. She has come to expect her every demand to be obeyed without question, and is unable to counter the Doctor's logical reasoning.

Adrasta is forced by Erato to speak the truth with her own larynx, and is killed by those she betrayed - her loyal Huntsman, the wolfweeds she cultivated (and which now choke the whole planet), and the Tythonian High Ambassador Erato who despatches her with the same indifference that she treated everyone around her. □

Torvin

THE FAGIN of Chloris has an ageing band of scrap metal merchants to bully, trick, or cajole into submission. Romana identifies him immediately as an hirsute moron, and understands his motivations within minutes. Torvin himself is never able to grasp the essentials of any situation or person without a great deal of prompting.

Romana has no worth to him as a person (unless she has metal legs). He carelessly (and frequently) lets slip his greedy self-interest in front of his fellow bandits, and it is only their stupidity that allows him to escape, for example, describing "my little nest egg". He thinks only of accruing as much metal as possible, but has little understanding of what he will do with it. His colleague Ainu has to explain the economics of a monopoly to him, even the economics of a mere two bodyweights of metal.

If he has any skill, it is in being able to lead his colleagues into articulating what *he* wants as though it were their own, democratically-agreed plan. But it is not much to claim that you are merely less stupid than your colleagues. Erato has little difficulty in mesmerising Torvin when he returns the Tythonian communicator.

Torvin's leadership skills are minimal - the opportunistic attack on Adrasta's palace, which appears to be co-ordinated by Ainu, is largely driven by fear and necessity, and the fight with the guards is largely uncoordinated. As soon as he recovers from the influence of Erato's communicator, Torvin's natural instincts return and he flees at the mere sight of Adrasta.

It is no surprise then that he dies not in the heat of battle, not even in a sneak bandit ambush, but from a stab in the back. And even then, his first and final reaction is to assess the value of the tempered steel blade. □

Organon

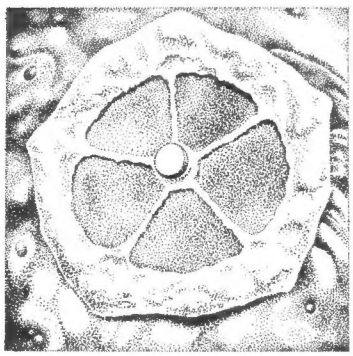
THE FUTURE foretold, the past explained, the present apologised for. Organon is an astrologer for many times and places. He is one of the few people to have travelled all over the planet, and in doing so has developed an instinct for survival.

Part of this is recognising what people want to hear. He half believes the mystical mumbo-jumbo he presents as a "seer to princes", as his persistent attention to the Doctor's circumstances of birth demonstrates. But mostly, he is an accomplished performer, who was thrown into the Pit only after a circumstance so unlikely that he could hardly have foreseen it: Adrasta's visitor from beyond the stars arrived *before* he predicted it.

He survives too in the old mines, feeding himself for many moonflows on scraps thrown by the palace serfs. He is altruistic enough to rescue the Doctor from the Creature, scared enough to stick close to him when he later goes in search of the monster, and confident enough later to start standing up to the guards pursuing his new friend.

Ironically, the fate of the planet does eventually depend on the stars - or one star in particular. And Organon nearly misses the dénouement because, brained by Karela, he ends up *seeing* stars. He will do well in the new regime now that Adrasta is gone: he clearly already has the measure of the Huntsman. □

Erato



WHAT DO people call you if you're a 200-foot blob with green veins full of chlorophyll, have skin like a cerebral membrane, eat mineral salts, but have no eyes, nose or mouth? Anything you like, because you can't answer back.

If you try hard enough to communicate with them, though, you could crush them to death. This would be your third mistake after arriving on Chloris - the frightened natives are frightened by you, which is why instead of calling you "the Tythonian ambassador" they call you "the Creature". Your second mistake was to trust Adrasta and allow her to trap you for fifteen years in what they call "the Pit". And, frankly your first mistake was to bargain unlimited supplies of metal for Chloris with the one person who that would put out of business.

Still, fifteen years out of a possible lifespan of 40,000 is like a mere fortnight to anyone else, by which time your colleagues will have despatched a neutron star to give your captors a short sharp shock. You, naturally, will have shrewdly taken the precaution of keeping most of your essential equipment (star drive, communicator) close to hand. You can recognise the Doctor as different to the others on Chloris, and are smart enough to provide him pure metal samples and other clues to assist him in freeing you. Thus you can negotiate your way off the planet with a mere 24 hours to spare - although, since this is the equivalent to you of about three minutes, aren't you cutting it a bit fine? Nevertheless, you can still make time for a cruel vengeance on Adrasta (and simultaneously, wolf down a small snack).

You can, it is true, be persuaded by the good Doctor to risk your life for the benefit of the many others on the planet Chloris, without his needing to threaten you. In the end, then, you will be seen to have been a courageous and resourceful blob. □

Script editing

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT was the first story Douglas Adams tackled fully in his new capacity as Script-Editor. Even though he was heavily committed to the many up-coming incarnations of *Hitch Hiker's Guide...* (stage show, double-album record, the first book, the second radio series), writers found Adams to be a thoughtful and energetic Editor. According to Fisher it was Adams' input that expanded and developed the characters of the bandits. Also he recalls Adams being very concerned about the feasibility of a planet with virtually no minerals developing a civilisation.

In keeping with Graham Williams' thinking, Adams also favoured cutting down the Doctor's role as a Time Lord knight in armour, and concentrating on developing him as an interesting character in his own right. He quickly established a strong friendship with Tom Baker, finding there was a lot in the actor's own eccentric personality he could use and work into the scripts. Hence Season 17 was far more the Doctor as Tom Baker than any previous or subsequent seasons where Tom Baker was merely the voice of the Doctor.

David Fisher too did some background research for the story, contacting scientists at Cambridge University to sound out the physics and properties of neutron stars. Of the five scripts he had accepted for **Doctor Who** Fisher names THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT as his personal favourite, with the least need for any re-writes.

Only when the full requirements of the creature were identified and provisionally costed was there a suggestion that a re-write be done to rethink and re-design the monster. Even before anyone had seen the creature there were doubts expressed about its realisation. However, by then it was judged too late in the day and so the scripts went through as written. □

Direction and casting

FOR HIS third year in the Producer's chair Graham Williams worked for some changes to try and make his life easier. He pressed his boss, Graeme MacDonald, to appoint John Nathan-Turner as Associate Producer on the show, arguing that day-to-day production problems would be far better in the hands of someone used to the mechanics and budgetary aspects of the programme. This would liberate the Producer to concentrate more on the creative and artistic sides, as well as being more responsible for looking after the **Doctor Who** 'product' as a whole. MacDonald turned down the request, but Williams' outline document nevertheless contained the seeds for what would follow in later years.

The appointment of Lalla Ward to play Romana was a rapidly made decision. She was not an automatic choice (Tom Baker went on record as saying he favoured comedienne Miriam Margoyles), but faced with Mary Tamm's rigid decision not to return, and acknowledging how well Lalla Ward and Tom Baker had got on together during "The Armageddon Factor", it was a quick and safe bet. She was formally contracted to the series on February 6th 1979 and announced to the Press the same day.

Taking on the role Lalla Ward expressed her aim to make Romana a person who, although possessed of an IQ of over 500, had a strong sense of fun. Her wish was to build more childish elements into the programme, feeling that **Doctor Who** had become too serious and pretentious of later. She favoured comparisons with **The Magic Roundabout** which, although aimed at children, had that strong cult following of adults which made it so universally popular. Along with Tom Baker she believed the ideal route to the programme's family audience was via its younger viewers.

To direct this story Graham Williams wanted, and got, senior staff Director Christopher Barry, whose association with **Doctor Who** went all the way back to the very first Dalek serial in 1963. Ironically Barry was available to do THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT because he had just finished doing several episodes of *All Creatures Great and Small*, the series he would then return to after this assignment.

Christopher Barry's appointment was confirmed in late January shortly before he and his wife departed abroad for a holiday in the Mediterranean. Presumably he was able to take the scripts with him because almost on his return he had to attend a film planning meeting at Ealing studios, with his team of Designers, on March 8th to discuss arrangements for shooting which was due to start on March 20th.

While Christopher Barry had no say in the casting of Romana, he was instrumental in selecting David Brierley as the new voice of K-9. Interviews and sound tests with a number of voice artists took place on March 9th, with final interviews scheduled for March 16th, the day Brierley was confirmed as the "new K-9".

Before then Christopher Barry has selected his cast. The script suggested Adrasta as a slim, willowy "Queen of the forest", but the Director felt she should be a tougher, more buxom figure. He chose the wife of *Prince Regent* actor Peter Egan, Myra Frances, for the role. He had directed her some years earlier on a *Z Cars* episode, but remembered her more from a *Thirty Minute Theatre* where she had played a lesbian-inclined ATS woman - a character interpretation he felt would fit a matriarch like Adrasta.

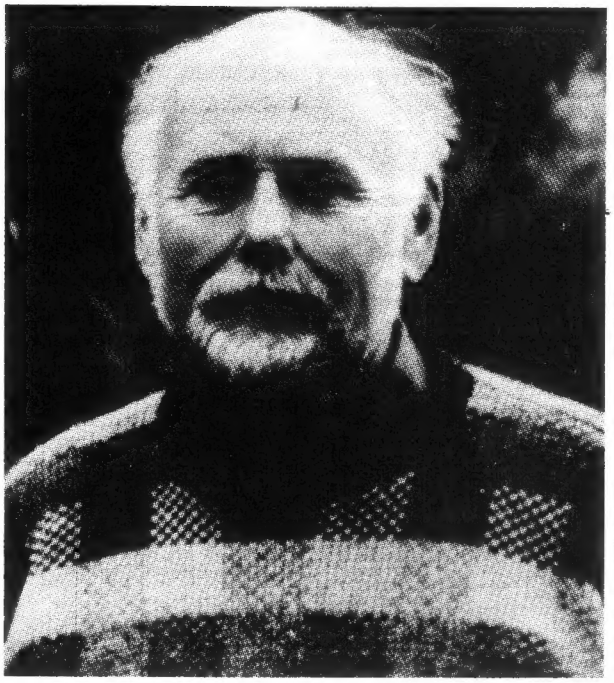
Geoffrey Bayldon, as Organon, was one of several actors suggested for the part. Along the way Barry considered Timothy Bateson (Binro in "The Ribos Operation"), Kevin Stoney (famous in **Doctor Who** as Mavic Chen and Tobias Vaughn) and, particularly, entertainer Max Wall whom he thought perfect to play an eccentric, septuagenarian scientist. Barry had worked with Geoffrey Bayldon on the *All Creatures...* episode PRIDE OF PASSION, but it was for his famous portrayal of the magician Catweazle that he was ultimately chosen.

"I chose Eileen Way to portray Karela because she has such a good face" Barry recalls, "Although her association with **Doctor Who** even pre-dates mine as she was in the very first story".

The three principle bandit parts went to John Bryans, Edward Kelsey and Tim Munro who, again, were chosen for having interesting "grisly" faces. Sources vary as to why the bandits ended up sounding Jewish. Some claim it was Douglas Adams' idea, in collusion with David Fisher, but Christopher Barry attributes it to John Bryans. Bryans, says Christopher Barry, suddenly started doing an impression of Alec Guiness as Fagin during the scene where the bandits are examining their horde of metal plates. To Bryans it reminded him of the sequence in *Oliver* where Fagin is displaying his collection of stolen watches.

Making a return to acting, after years producing and directing, was Morris Barry, a distant relative of Christopher Barry, playing Tollund. As his doomed partner Doran was stuntman Terry Walsh, to whom Barry gave a speaking role in recognition of all his fine stunt work. □

Effective Directing



THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT was director CHRISTOPHER BARRY's last *DOCTOR WHO* story to date. Problems with the special effects made it a sad epitaph to such a long association with the programme. Talking exclusively to *IN-VISION*, CHRISTOPHER BARRY outlined his grievances but pondered if the scope of this serial was more than the show, at that time, could handle.

I suppose the whole thing was conditioned by the creature, and anything that was not as I hoped it would be sprung directly from that. From the point of view of the script, and the design of the whole story, it works quite well. It wasn't what I would call a strong story, but it carries, although I never quite understood how the creature ever got into the pit in the first place!

I did like the costumes and the make-up, and everything we got on film at Ealing looked terrific. Ealing was decided upon because of the logistics of the Wolfweeds. We needed good, level floors for them to roll along, which we never would have found if we had gone on location. That opening sequence where they play "grandmother's footsteps" with the Doctor made a totally flat surface crucial to their believability. The other factor that determined Ealing was the pit itself; the fact that we needed to be able to see the pit from different camera angles - from the surface looking down into it, and from inside the shaft looking up. It would have been possible to do the shots on location, but for my money the controlled atmosphere we were able to create inside that studio, with the mist and the green lighting, gave far better results.

I never liked K-9 though. I had always hated him in other people's stories and I suddenly found I was stuck with him in mine. I felt K-9's role in the story detracted from the cleverness of the Doctor - there was always someone else who was equally as clever, or even cleverer, than him, which I felt weakened the Doctor's character. The Doctor would get into a problem, largely, it has to be said, through his own making, but instead of using his ingenuity to escape, this tin dog comes along and does it for him.

At the outset I had no idea how we would realise the creature. I have said in the past to Terry Nation: it's all very well writing a one paragraph description in the script, but when it comes to materialising it from the words and making it practical, anything the writer gives you is hardly any help at all (although Terry's description of the Dalek was actually very full and descriptive in television terms). In truth what was required to be shown visually on the screen from David Fisher's script, in terms of that creature, was a pretty impossible assignment considering the relative meagreness of **Doctor Who**'s resources. You can say I should have thrown up my hands in horror when I first saw the scripts and stated there and then that it could not be realised. We would then have saved ourselves all the traumas of what followed, but I suppose I was foolish enough to accept the scripts, and having done so had then to push everyone else to make it work for me. I believe it was right that the task of designing the monster went to the Visual Effects Department as it was too early in the history of television to have done it entirely electronically, which probably would be the approach I would take today. Indeed if you look at the episodes, one of the most successful bits is where we have obviously used two different picture elements, melded them together with a soft edge, and created an image of the big monster, from our model shooting, with a smaller section from the live action creature set in front of it. If we could have done more of that I think it would have worked better. Instead we were stuck with using this enormous barrage balloon construction with its streaky skin and wrinkles. It was a mistake.

We did look at possible other alternatives. Having several sizes of the creature was one idea, although ultimately, and probably for cost reasons, we >>

>> settled, I think, just for one scale model, for use in ChromaKey long-shots, and for the barrage balloon. Small, animated puppets going down corridors we also talked about, but the problem was none of us really knew what we were going to see before the first time it was assembled and rolled out in the studio. Undoubtedly the creature underwent many design changes as we went along because my demands for what it should do got harder and harder for Mat Irvine to fulfil. For instance, we learned that it had to be large enough to fill the entrance way to Adrasta's palace, that it had a proboscis thin enough to come around corners in front of it, that it could spin a web, pin the Doctor to a wall, and write messages.

I suppose my worries, and therefore presumably the start of the grievances between Mat and I, began while we were still working in the rehearsal block at Acton. After we had finished for the day I would very often go round the corner to Visual Effects, where Mat was working on the props, and say, "We've discovered today the creature needs to have two arms. Can it do this? Can it do that?", asking him to amend what he was working on, and probably sounding increasingly hesitant and critical because of my concerns over what it would all look like. Frankly I was worried about it, which may have made me a harder taskmaster to work with.

That all came to a head that first morning when the proboscis appeared around a corner of the studio set and Graham Williams promptly roared with laughter. At that point everyone in the gallery realised we could not show on screen what looked for all the world like a shiny giant penis wobbling towards the camera. So drastic action had to be taken there and then to try and change it and make it look less phallic. We didn't really succeed as is plainly obvious if you watch it today. The simple truth is that the demands of the script were greater than could be fulfilled under the conditions we were working.

I'm sure we tried as much as we could to disguise the monster's limitations. I know we cut down some of the lighting inside the creature, maybe we did something with the studio lights as well. The cast, luckily, was very supportive although, like the rest of us, they laughed themselves silly when they first saw it coming down the passage. I do recall there was always apprehension during rehearsals, probably spreading from me, about how this thing was going to work.

Maybe you could argue I had not adequately defined my terms of reference to Mat. I certainly had defined how I wanted to use the creature, particularly in any of the ChromaKey shots. In episode two, for instance, there is a shot which is almost identical in construction to something I had done in THE MUTANTS where I had the Doctor and Jo walking into a shimmering cave. There the cave had been a model with a long shot of the characters put in front of it using ChromaKey. That had worked well, so I knew I wanted to repeat that formula here.

The basic problem was how to make it ooze along and fill corridors the way the script specified. Ideally it should be made of jelly, so it could flow around objects and fill any space available, before retracting itself back and appearing somewhere else. That's how I saw it in my mind, but of course technically it proved too difficult to achieve. I was upset, and so was Mat. I can only say that no matter what we tried, the creature always looked like a pantomime prop. It never looked like a threatening monster in any way, shape or form.

What didn't help was that Mat and I had already had one clash over the model filming, although in fairness that wasn't his fault. My chief criticism there goes to the film cameraman, Paul Wheeler, who has since gone on to become a very successful film maker outside the BBC. He worked on his own - I wasn't present for the filming - and when I saw the rushes, you could see all the wires holding the models. Basically, he had lit it badly and the wires weren't black against the backdrop. I said it was unacceptable, it wasn't up to my standards and would all have to be re-shot. Graham came down to arbitrate, and agreed with me, so everything was remounted.

Remounting is expensive, so it is the Producer's responsibility to say yay or nay. After all, it is his money you're spending! However, I think most Producers will side with their Director ultimately if it is an artistic matter to do with the quality of the programme. He has a vested interest in ensuring the show looks good and doesn't get laughed out of court, which is what would have happened if I had let that first attempt go through.

At the end of the day everyone did all they could to salvage the best from a bad job. We subsequently did have a post-mortem on the project with myself, Graham and Mat all marching before the Head of Visual Effects, Michaeljohn Harris, to put our cases. Graham and I presented our viewpoints and then Mat replied with his. Mat felt, with reason, that his integrity had been impuned by what Graham and I had said about this monster. Accusations had been flying for some time and it was getting quite nasty. I don't remember anything as unpleasant in my work at the BBC between one department and another in all my career there. It got to the point where Mat thought his career was on the line and believed he had not been given a fair hearing in the matter.

Michaeljohn Harris naturally defended Mat very loyally, as indeed he had every right to, and I think it was realised that it had been a difficult assignment, and I had been a very hard taskmaster because of my own uncertainties and my own nervousness about how it should look.

With hindsight now I can appreciate that we possibly went about it the wrong way. But even attempting to do it electronically, we would still have needed a lot of props and mechanical effects in the studio.

For myself I felt my own standards had been compromised; that people would laugh at the show rather than be frightened by it. True there is always comedy in **Doctor Who**, but the creature was perceived as being one of the threats, not a joke element.

Looking at it now, thirteen years on, I reckon what we probably did wrong was try to make the monster look rubbery and slimy. Maybe if we had thought to give it more of a reptilian or a spikey appearance it would have looked perhaps more menacing. □

Film work

STUDIO 3-B at Ealing was prepared and dressed over the weekend of March 17th/18th 1979, with filming due to commence on Tuesday 20th following two days of rehearsals with the cast. Unfortunately a union dispute over a wrongful dismissal erupted that morning, with the result a whole day's shooting had to be abandoned.

Under the auspices of Film Cameraman David Feig work finally got under way, later than planned, on Wednesday morning, shooting the various sacrifice sequences first, just in case any injuries were sustained by Terry Walsh. After that the Wolfweeds were put through their paces. These were radio controlled props with internal gear boxes moving a series of internal cam mechanisms - thus causing their rolling motion. However, during the day, several of the gear boxes developed faults and had to be replaced. Also, random interference signals were prone to setting off the Wolfweeds at times when they were not supposed to be moving. To pull back his schedule Christopher Barry would shoot a scene no more than three times whenever possible to save time.

Live action filming continued for the remainder of the week with a "Radio Times" and Press photocall scheduled for Thursday 22nd. Because they had lost the Tuesday, arrangements were hastily made to retain the set over the weekend and shoot for an additional day on Monday 26th March. This, in turn, put back the model filming by one day.

A curious visitor to the set was a film crew from the children's series *Animal Magic* who had arranged, with the **Doctor Who** office, for Tom Baker to do a small insert for one of their programmes, hosted by Johnny Morris.

As filming wrapped early on the final day a slot was made available and a short, five minute spot was filmed with Baker, in stocks, talking directly to the camera - presumably reading his lines at the same time. □

Tom Baker on Animal Magic

"Now a little while ago I happened to be on Earth and I was having a discussion with the friend of mine who said that on Earth you have some ferocious animals, and he started to get a little bit competitive about certain animals and creatures you've got on Earth that are either deadly or large, and naturally he quoted the elephant which he said was the largest, and he quoted among the deadly ones the puff adder.

"Of course, well I mean I didn't want to put him down but, I just had to tell him about some of the things I've bumped into-on my travels. I mean, I remember in THE RIBOS OPERATION, do you remember the Shrivenzale? *[colour slide of creature in catacombs]* The Shrivenzale wasn't all that big really and I think smaller than an elephant, but it was extremely voracious in its appetite. It was a carnivore, that means it eats meat, and I'll tell you how fierce it was; six buffaloes a day it used to eat, and two wheel-barrow loads of coconuts - unbroken! When it wanted to break open the coconuts, if it did, it had very short arms and it used to put the coconut in its arms like that [He demonstrates, removing one arm from the stocks and replacing it later.], and crack it, like that!

"And after the Shrivenzale there was the Krynoid. Do you remember the Krynoid? *[colour slide of humanoid Krynoid in power house]* Tall as a Douglas fir and three times its circumference. That creature, the Krynoid, had a plan to recruit all the plant life on Earth and turn it against humanity. It had this idea that it could turn all the daffodils and hyacinths and elderberry bushes and blackberry bushes and things like that, and rose trees into deadly enemies of Man. Now that was a creature. Quite difficult to beat, that one. Somehow I managed, with a bit of luck.

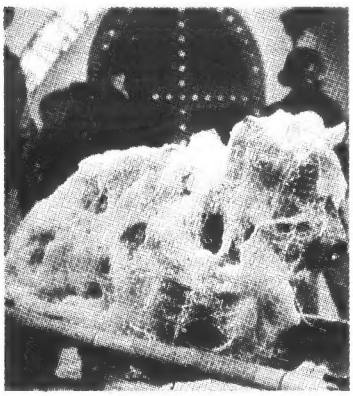
"Then, of course, there was the Wirrn. *[colour slide of two Wirrn in the shuttle craft]* Now, the Wirrn, in the story THE ARK IN SPACE, remember that one? The Wirrn was a giant insect with a sting so fierce it could have done-in an elephant in five seconds. And that's only three!

"Then there was the Fendahl. Do you remember the Fendahl? This Fendahl was so deadly that when it used to pass anybody, it would just walk past someone and go... *(he sucks in his breath)* ...and suck the life right out of them. That was a difficult one too, but somehow we managed it. What did you say? You don't believe it? Well, you look out next time I'm on. (He laughs madly) Bye-bye!"

(he walks off into the jungle - Proof positive that Tom Baker writes his own material ?) □

Studio recording

REHEARSALS and initial read-throughs commenced Marched 29th in preparation for the first studio block just under a fortnight hence. Except for a couple of days all rehearsals ran from 1:00 pm till 7:00 pm and took place at the so-called Acton Hilton rehearsal rooms. Christopher Barry found Tom Baker much harder to control than during ROBOT and THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS. He, and Lalla Ward, who were just beginning to discover how well they got on with one another, insisted on re-writing whole chunks of their dialogue, which tended to delay proceedings.



Unlike his predecessor, David Brierley was not prepared to rehearse on all fours, preferring instead just to walk through K-9's movements.

Rehearsals for Block One continued until Saturday April 7th with recording itself commencing the following Monday in studio TC6. This was a two day shoot, the primary sets being the caves, caverns and tunnels beneath the pit.

It was the first opportunity the cast and crew had to see the fully erected monster (an enormous construction made from meteorological balloons), and the raucous reception its appearance received has since become popular **Who** History. Hastily Mat Irvine and his team of effects assistants were required to re-dress the monster to make its appearance less like something that might cause offence to Mary Whitehouse and amusement to other viewers.

After two days in the studio it was back to Acton for three more days of rehearsals (including Good Friday). A VT transfer session was booked for Thursday evening to dump down the footage shot in Block One onto tape. Christopher Barry favoured doing rough video edits on his own at home to increase his throughput during formal sessions in the BBC's Edit Suites.

The next week was a solid week of rehearsals for the cast. On Tuesday and Wednesday the model filming was re-done and film dubbing of all the Ealing shot material took place. On Thursday morning Tom Baker and Myra Frances were called in early to pre-record those lines Erato would speak in their voices.

The second recording block was three days and commenced Sunday April 22nd, again in TC6. This time the primary sets were the TARDIS interior and the rooms and chambers of Adrasta's palace. □

Creating the Desired Effect

One of the BBC's youngest Effects Designers in 1979, MAT IRVINE was called upon to create a *DOCTOR WHO* monster that would have given even seniors in the profession with movie size budgets cause to pause. Now older and more experienced, Mat told *IN-VISION* why his intuition should have been to "Just say No!"

"Part of the problem with **Who** is that you didn't always get a full script ideally when you should. In a perfect world the script would always come first, everything else would follow later, because you basically need to work from the script. But the BBC is not a perfect world, even less so **Doctor Who**. Many productions have been made without a full set of scripts, or even with the script being written as you go along.

"I can't honestly remember now if what I first saw on THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT was a full rehearsal script or just a first draft. I seem to recall my first thoughts were simply worries about the general chaos of trying to get a **Doctor Who** done within the time scale, with an almost total lack of budget, and with very little in the way of guidance and co-ordination to work around.

"I suppose the creature should have rang bigger alarm bells sooner than it did. But the fact is it wasn't needed until the first studio, there were other aspects in the story, effects-wise, which were needed sooner. My immediate priorities were what was needed on film, like the eggs, the shield communicator and the Wolfweeds, and then what was needed for the model work; the egg spaceship, the TARDIS and, of course, the smaller model set of the static creature in the caves.

"The big creature caused problems because it wasn't well defined in the script. If someone writes in the script, "...a gelatinous blob", it gives you nothing to work on whatsoever. Questions arise. How big is it? What colour and texture? What can it do? Slimy or rough? Slow moving or fast. It is also true to say that very rarely is an effect called upon to inter-act with the cast and give a performance. You can quote the Daleks, but they are virtually an exception. Most of the time effects are about things like guns and communicators, in other words props, or else set pieces to open or close a scene; an explosion or an establishing shot of a model. There will be interaction with the cast on the day, say with floor effects like a ceiling collapsing or a door bursting open, but these are largely individual instances; a one-off that is planned, it happens, and then you worry about the next scene.

"Our monster was built on a moveable framework, precisely so it could inter-act with the cast, and especially with the Doctor. But again, even though we were building it and were down to operate it, there was no time for anyone to go along to rehearsals to observe, or even to practise with the actors. The frame was built and then covered with latex Met. balloon material. Five of us operated the thing; pushing it in various places to get some kind of movement, working the lamps and, I think, even inflating and deflating some air bladders as well. It was a total lash-up really, and it showed.

"Creatures are almost worst case scenarios. They are cast in that they have to act and give performances, but they are effects if they are not something that can be made to be worn by the Costume Department, or applied to an actor's face and body by Make-Up. The creature did not fulfil either of these requirements, and so by the old definition; if it isn't Costume or Make-up or a set, it must therefore be an effect. I have a strong suspicion I got lumbered with the creature because none of the other departments wanted to deal with it. They were probably very glad to get rid of it. A favourite saying of mine is, when they run out of ideas, they give it to Effects!

"The creature you see in the model was a completely different animal to what was essentially a prop that you saw in the studio. The model was far more under control. It sat on its own little set. You could light it as you wanted, direct it as you wanted, and because it was seen only on film, you could edit the footage as much as you wanted. The model creature worked fine. It was constructed in clear, inflatable plastic, from a plaster mould over a clay original. Air was pumped in from bladders so we could make it pulsate, and the whole thing looked good because it was lit inside with tiny glowing lights and lit externally in a far more subtle manner than you could achieve in a studio.

"*Alien* is the film that proves, if ever proof was needed, that less is more. You virtually never see the creature. A brief glimpse here, a sudden cutaway shot to a hand or a jaw, and all edited in quick succession so that the mind thinks it has seen more than it has.

"With a TV studio you lose all that. For a start you have a five camera set-up, so you can't light for just one shot or for one camera. Things are better now with the newer cameras that enable you to have much lower lighting levels, which is why "Red Dwarf" looks so good even though it too is done on tape. In 1979 all studio sets more or less had to be lit flat and very bright, otherwise the T.M.1s would complain they were getting poor

signal quality.

"The other problem is editing. The key to all good drama is editing. You can get away with almost anything if the editing is done right. **Doctor Who**, as with all TV set-ups, gets pre-edited in the studio by the Vision Mixer. He, or she, is the one pushing the buttons who determines which shots, from what cameras, get recorded onto the one spool of master tape turning away in the basement. It is a skill and, of course, it needs a good Director to plan all the shots in advance from the script. But once you've recorded a scene, you're stuck with the edited sequences you've got, unless you decide to go back and do the scene again. Unlike film the Director can't go away and play with five spools of footage from five different TV cameras. He can delete a sequence, or even add a cutaway, but he hasn't got the option of deciding the creature looks best from this angle, or from that height, or that it looks better seen for just two seconds before we cut to a close-up of the cast instead of thirty seconds. It is one of the sad limitations of television that you cannot get around unless you are prepared for the time and expense of doing everything more or less as a single camera shoot.

"Another truth about television is that there is a limited amount of effort available to do anything. Quantifiably there is only so much manufacturing time built into a production, and so much shooting time. I do remember getting annoyed at the time about the creature because I didn't feel I was getting any backup from anyone about it. So I suppose I tended to shove worrying about it into the background for as long as I could while I concentrated on the things that needed to be done first, like the Wolfweeds and the models. In the end the effort that was needed to go into making something like the creature work just could not be done in the time available and with the budget.

"I recall I kept asking questions of Production about it, but I didn't get any answers. Now for anyone working in Design that is the worst position to be in. Logically you could say I should have dug my heels in and demanded those answers, but that's the benefit hindsight gives you. With hindsight, and with thirteen years' experience, I would never have agreed to take on the project in the first place - not with the budget and the timescales we were given. I'm braver now, but I wasn't then.

"A lot of effects people will tell you they're not paid to do it right, they're paid to do it right first time! Ninety-five percent of the time you achieve this. Only in five percent of cases does it get done less than perfectly, or goes wrong completely. With THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT it did go wrong, but mainly because no-one had time beforehand to sit down and define from the start exactly what this creature was going to be, what it was going to do, and therefore work out how we could do it, if we could do it. In that respect television is better today than it was in 1979.

"We've learned from our mistakes, you might say. Although it sometimes appears more chaotic we are more disciplined now in recognising what is feasible and what isn't. Frankly, we are more inclined to say, "No you can't do this because you don't have the money or the time. But we can do this instead..."

"In the old days we would do it, even if there was no money and little time, because the accounting system we used then was less precise than it is nowadays. There would be a budget, but an awful lot of it was 'Monopoly' money. Now, every penny and every man hour spent has to be accounted for, and somebody ultimately has to foot a detailed and itemised bill. So if we know we can't do what they want in the time, we tell them so."

"It boils down to that triangle about Money, Quality and Time. You can achieve any two, but the price is always the third. If you don't have lots of money you can get quality, but it will take time. If you don't have time, you can still get quality, but it will need lots of money. On the other hand if you don't worry about quality you can get it done on time and at a good price. With THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT we didn't have either. They wanted quality, but were not prepared to spend time or money....

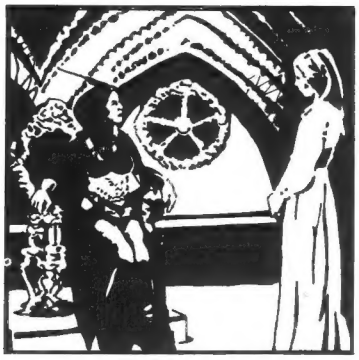
"I did get annoyed by the whole thing, and yes I did make a complaint. Okay, you are the Effects Designer, so you must be prepared to take the brickbats as well as the bouquets. But what upset me was the irritating feeling I was being made the scapegoat on this show, even though I hadn't followed my instincts, I hadn't pulled out, I'd been as professional as one can ever be. It was lack of communication and the whole **Doctor Who** set-up that was wrong for this type of story.

"You have to remember that, despite being science-fiction, **Doctor Who** was still made in a very conservative way. It was still done as a running drama on a studio floor, albeit with film inserts, using multi-camera set-up and harsh lighting conditions that harked back to the old days of BBC variety shows. Shows like THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT, NIGHTMARE OF EDEN and THE HORNS OF NIMON were lit the same way as **The Wednesday Play** or an episode of **The Pallisers**.

"If I was asked to take on such a project today, it would get done a lot differently. Electronic Effects would play a much bigger role. Even in 1979 electronic effects were still at a comparatively basic level. Terms like *Paintbox* and *Morphing* just weren't around, and yet we were still asked to perform miracles.

"It was hangover from Jack Kine who always said, "If it can be imagined, it can be made". He's right, but perhaps he should have added, "...if you've got the time and the money!" □

Set design



VALERIE WARRENDER, in 1979 one of the few women Set Designers working at the BBC, was assigned to this story, having worked previously on another David Fisher **Doctor Who**, THE ANDROIDS OF TARA. It was Warrender who proposed using Ealing for the exteriors instead of going on location. There were several good reasons for this. Chloris was stipulated as being a very green planet, verdant with lush vegetation. In March, with winter not quite over, it would be nearly impossible to find a suitableA a major excavation outside. Lastly, Warrender wanted as much controlled green lighting conditions as possible to imply an abundance of vegetation.

Studio 3-B, the smallest of the three sound stages at Ealing, was booked to become Chloris; chosen because nearly half its floor space comprised a sunken rectangular tank, six foot deep, which could be flooded if required, although it would be used 'dry' on this occasion.

The ground level area became the jungle; a backdrop of misty mountains and sky forming two sides of the giant set, decorated with fibreglass rocks, bushes, imported pot plants, grass and festooned with leafy branches and creepers suspended from the ceiling. Bags of fertiliser were poured over the set to simulate soil and, as the cameras turned, hidden jets of dry ice were turned on to give the whole area a misty look.. This illusion was further emphasised by spraying water over any foliage close to the cameras just before filming.

The tank area, in effect, became two sets. Part of it was covered over and linked with the main set, leaving just a small aperture visible. This was the pit as seen from ground level looking down. Beneath this pit, mattresses were spread around to cushion the fall of anyone (Terry Walsh in particular) jumping, or being thrown, into the pit.

The remaining area was the pit as seen from inside looking up. The sides of the tank were clad in textured fibre-glass, adorned with rockflowers and moss, and decorated with cobwebs and dust. Props of mummified bodies were scattered around to suggest the fate of previous victims of Adrasta's displeasure. Most of this area was open so that the set could be lit, the only exception being one corner which was covered except for a rock surrounded aperture; this was the pit entrance as seen from below. Mattresses were positioned here too for certain scenes so that, again, Terry Walsh could reprise his falls, this time captured from a 16mm camera positioned down in the tank.

To the side of the central stage area were props which would only be used for certain scenes; the full size TARDIS and the piece of cracked fibre-glass shell that would be revealed as Erato's ship. □

Make up

A NEWCOMER to **Doctor Who**, Gillian Thomas's main concerns were the ageing make-up worn by Geoffrey Bayldon, and the scruffy, unkempt appearances of the bandits.

Bayldon's was the longest make-up session. Although in his fifties he had a face young and sprightly enough to require a couple of hours in the chair while the layers of ageing stipple, beard and hair appliances were grafted on and built up.

As well as wigs, the bandits had to be "dirtied down", with lines and shading added to give them their "grubby, hirsute" looks.

For Myra Frances, once she was in full costume, Gillian Thomas added an ornate pattern in silver body paint to her face to emphasise the serpent-like quality suggested by her costume. □

Costume

HANDLING the first of three **Doctor Whos** this year was June Hudson. A key part of her job was to create the look of the new Romana, even though CREATURE would not be the first story in transmission order. Graham Williams told Lalla Ward this would give them an opportunity for experimentation. If she was unhappy with her outfit they could make changes for subsequent stories and get it "right" before her on-air debut. It was an ominous promise to make...

For Romana II, June Hudson designed a variation of the white gown costume Romana I had worn in her first story. Again the principle colour was white; a white pleated chiffon gown sprayed pink at the edges (pink to suggest a softer image for this Romana), slashed to the waist, tied with windings of gold cord, revealing a silver body stocking and a pair of silver boots.

Lalla Ward hated it. Topped by the heavily lacquered hair style she was given by Make-up Designer Gillian Thomas, she complained the whole outfit was uncomfortable to wear and made her look like a "leggy bimbo, just there to keep the dads interested". Coupled with too harsh a personality it was not at all the image she wanted to present. It did lead to some friction between Lalla Ward and Graham Williams, but in return for her agreeing it was too late to change things for this serial, Williams offered to give her a say in all future costumes and hair styles.

For the people of Chloris June

Hudson reasoned that if they spent their existences surrounded by greens and natural hues, their fashions would reflect colours not found in nature; harsh reds and blacks. The huntsmen and guards were given outfits of rayon velvet backed onto foam with cigarette quilted ski jackets as the top layer. Sprayed ice hockey masks completed the costumes.

Adrasta's costume required June Hudson's prop maker, Roger Oldhamstead to take a torso cast of Myra Frances, from which a ribbed PVC outfit was constructed, topped off with velvet trappings. It was a very tight fit. Once the actress had been sewn into it, the costume was not easy to remove.

Organon's costume included ropes (made of foam) hung from it.

June Hudson's lasting impression of the story was: "It was a very rich episode which I thoroughly enjoyed doing." □

Visual effects

ALL THE model shots should have been filmed on Monday 26th March, but due to the industrial dispute it was held over until the next day. Overnight Monday most of the set was struck, leaving just some of the backdrops and a few props for Mat Irvine and his cameraman, Peter Wheeler, to use for the Chloris miniatures. A separate star field backdrop was used for the sequences of the TARDIS, the neutron star and Erato's ship in space.

Also shot on film was an establishing shot of the TARDIS landed by Erato's broken egg-spaceship, and a separate model stage featuring the full size creature - a gelatinous mass which was the closest the production ever came to matching David Fisher's specifications for the monster. In a production plagued with problems it was the one effect of which Mat Irvine felt proud.

The space ship scenes did not go well. Unused to filming models, cameraman Peter Wheeler left the wires all too visible, especially to fine-grain 35mm film. When Christopher Barry came to view the rushes on March 30th he was appalled, and demanded a reshoot. Graham Williams backed him up and so a partial remount was scheduled for April. The date was to have been April 11th, but a combination of prior bookings and the Easter holidays postponed it until the 17th and then the 18th April.

All the model filming was done at BBC Visual Effects, Western Avenue.

Erato's communicator-shield was a working prop. The central hub lit up as Erato used it to speak. □

Electronic effects

ERATO's shell-weaving was done as a video effect - primarily a glow followed by a fade to the finished shell. A weaving effect of tracery lines was also added to the model work in the final sequences as Erato weaves an aluminium shell around the nutron star.

The tractor beam is shown as an electronic judder on the picture and a scatter of lights over the models to show the field.

Other electronic effects include the ChromaKeyed TARDIS scanner, and Erato's drawing of his communicator-shield on the wall of the Pit. Electronic effects also added the glow to the shield as it activates and superimposed lights apparently flashing inside it.

K-9's beam is also an electronic effect, as is the glow from the pile of metal he destroys. It then bursts into flames and fades away. □

Special sound

AS USUAL, Dick Mills handled the special sound for THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT.

Most of the work was standard. Stock effects included the TARDIS materialisation and dematerialisation as well as forest background noises for Chloris.

The main 'new' effect was the collection of noises made by the Creature in the Pit - snores, rumbles and squelches. □

Post-production

CHRISTOPHER BARRY's diary notes the following sequence of events which took place after completion of all studio recording. It gives an insight into just how much a Director does, even after the cameras have finished turning, on a complicated production like a **Doctor Who**.

Fri. 27th April
Gallery only session in TC1 to add electronic effects and do remaining film to video transfers
Mon. 30th April - Fri. 4th May
Option of doing pre-editing at home with Shibaden tape recorder.
Wed. 16th, Sat. 19th, Sun. 20th May
VT editing in Edit Suite A, 09:00 till 18:45Footage split and assembled into episodes.
Mon. 21st May
Shibaden review with Dudley Simpson to planmusic cues
Tue. 22nd May
VT editing in Suite A, 14:00 till 23:00
Thu. 24th May
VT editing in Suite A, 09:00 till 18:45
Fri. 35th May
Cancelled meeting with Dudley Simpson as allmusic cues had been discussed satisfactorilyon the Monday
Mon. 4th June
First day back on *All Creatures Great andSmall* to discuss film work on new season.

Music

DUDLEY SIMPSON was once again responsible for the incidental music. He produced a straightforward score. This included the *Doctor's Theme* he had used several times before including in the scores for THE ARK IN SPACE and THE STONES OF BLOOD. The theme is used as the Doctor goes to speak to the released Erato in part four.

Part 1:
Opening Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 31"
Closing Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 52"
Incidental Music (Dudley Simpson): 4'35"

Part 2:
Opening Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 30"
Closing Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 52"
Incidental Music (Dudley Simpson): 7'52"

Part 3:
Opening Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 32"
Closing Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 52"
Incidental Music (Dudley Simpson): 7'50"

Part 4:
Opening Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 30"
Closing Music (Ron Grainer and BBC Radiophonic Workshop): 52"
Incidental Music (Dudley Simpson): 7'30" □

Cuts

THE editing of THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT did not involve the removal of any scenes that were integral to the plot. The final edited version remained faithful to Fisher's original script.

In Australia the story was shown beginning February 5th 1980. Some cuts were made to the transmitted version to gain the desired rating on ABC. Part three lost shots at the end of Adrasta holding a knife to the Doctor's throat, and part four the knifing of a bandit. Also a few cuts were made to the scene where the Doctor describes the true nature of the threat facing Chloris. □

Thu. 7th June
AM: Shibaden review of completed episodes with Dudley Simpson to finalise timings.
PM: Meeting with Dick Mills to plan special sound requirements.
Thu. 14th June
Music recording at Lime Grove, conducted by Dudley Simpson, episodes 1 and 2
Fri. 15th June
Sypher dub of episode 1
Wed. 20th June
Sypher dub of episode 2
Tue. 26th June
Music recording at Lime Grove, episodes 3 and 4 then off to Yorkshire for a week's filming on *All Creatures...*
Wed. 11th July
Sypher dub of episodes 3 and 4, 13:30 till23:00
Thu. 2nd August
View completed episodes with Graham MacDonaldand Graham Williams. □

Transmission

DESPITE Graeme MacDonald's reservations and Graham Williams' doubts, CREATURE started its run on October 27th 1979, getting respectable ratings and no adverse comment despite *that* monster. Part two even managed an audience appreciation score of 67, which was quite high even by **Doctor Who**'s own average.

The story was sold to the USA in the early eighties as a 91 minute TV movie, although it was not part of the first batch sold to Lionheart in 1978, which consisted of ROBOT through to THE INVASION OF TIME. □

Creature feature

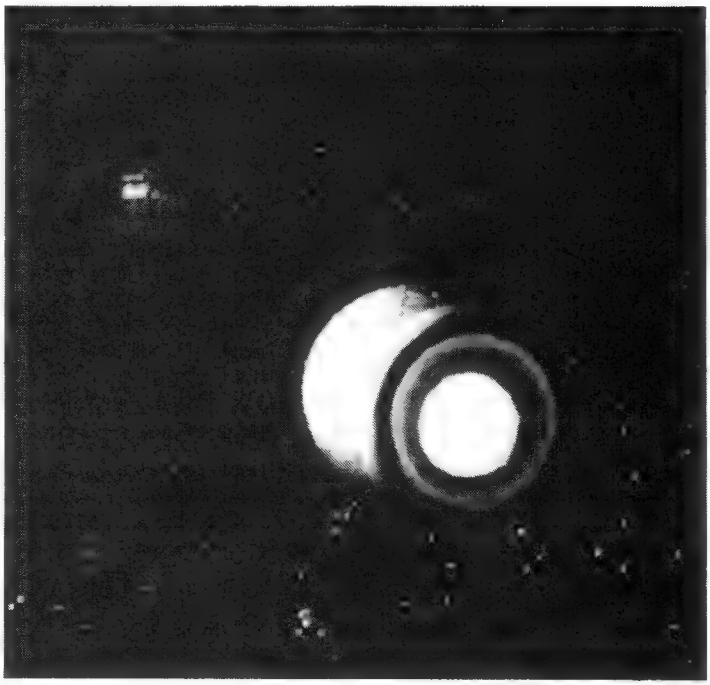
PETER LINFORD examines THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT and finds the story innovative and absurd

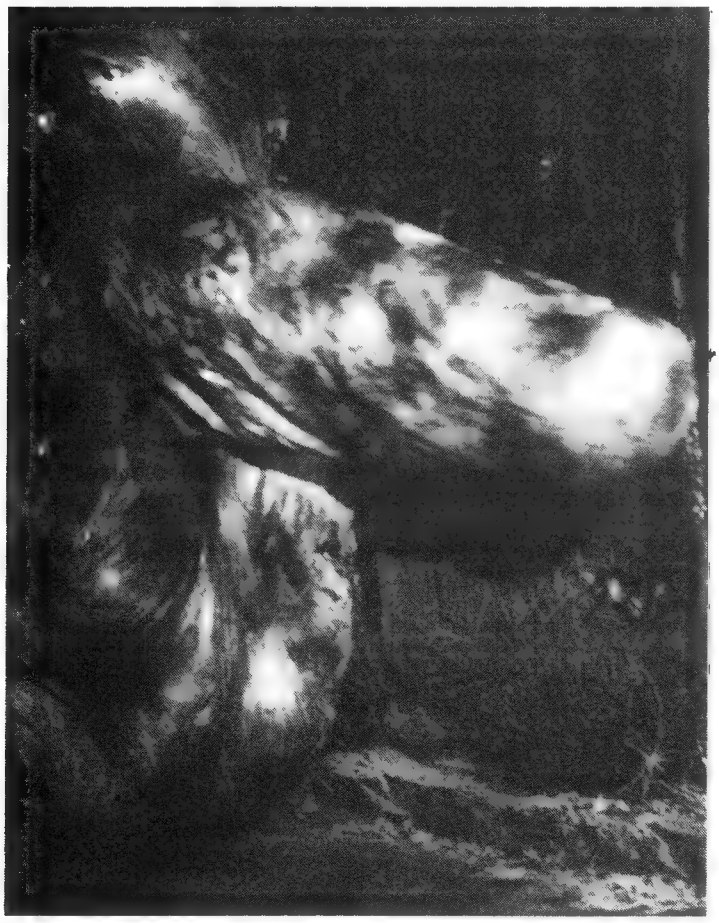
IN AN ARTICLE in *Purple Haze* issue 2, the estimable Paul Kirkley observed that the titles of many **Doctor Who** stories could just as easily be titles of naff sf movies of the 'fifties and 'sixties. TERROR OF THE ZYGONS, for example (not to mention ...OF THE AUTONS and ... OF THE VERVOIDS) or INVASION OF THE DINOSAURS could quite happily have been movies to thrill the pre-Star Wars generation. Hammer would have leapt at THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS, Hawkes at THE SEEDS OF DEATH, and THE TALONS OF WENG-CHIANG would have had Roger Corman writhing in ecstasy.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT, however, is another matter. The title is the very quintessence of the genre. Mysterious, probably alien and certainly horrible monsters, lurking in dark and dangerous places where angels fear to tread if only they knew about them. THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT plays to this expectation of its title in such a way as points clearly to its absurdity (warning: *absurd* is a key word and will be used several times). All the elements are there. The creature, the tunnels, the white-clad virgin, the fearful tribesmen, the terrible ruler despatching at will anyone who fails them - they are all there. Everything, it seems, is prepared for a juvenile romp through the cliché-ridden annals of horror history.

But before half of the first episode has passed it is clear that all is not what it seems. In the first place, the Creature is not *from* the Pit, it is *in* it, and shows no sign of leaving. Second, none of the characters seems to be entirely serious about the situation, and there is far too much self-awareness washing around.

The hairy tribesmen, fresh out of any Blake's Seven episode you care to mention, are wholly clear that hairy tribesmen is exactly what they are - and they are trying very hard to better themselves (cf **Blake's Seven**: POWER). They are already experimenting with democracy in episode one, and by part four are even getting to grips with the mechanics of inflation. They have even realised that they are not actually very good as bandits. The beautiful virgin, aware of this accordingly refuses to play the part and attempts first to reason with them, then patronises them into submission before zapping them and escaping. Similarly, astrologer Organon ("The future foretold, the past explained, the present - apologised for") realises he is not up to it and starts cheating.



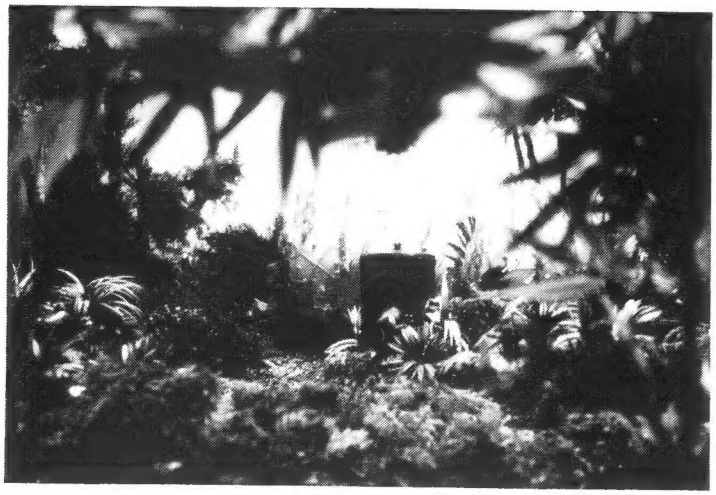


But the horror genre is not David Fisher's only target. Doctor Who is itself in his sights, and a number of its absurdities are brutally demonstrated. Having pointedly ignored the impossibility of K-9 navigating his way across the terrain to the tribesmen's hideout, the dog is then repeatedly overcome by wolfweeds which are faster than he is, disabled by being picked up, and finally pointed against a wall so he can't zap anyone. Instead of the heroic human clobbering the nasty monster the heroic monster clobbers the nasty human. Instead of the Doctor being thrust into danger at every cliffhanger, he is actually in no danger at all but leaps voluntarily into situations which the viewers simply do not understand. But if part one has one of the best cliffhangers ever, the end of part three has a very traditional close that really doesn't fit in so deliberately silly a story.

It might be stretching a point to claim that the purpose of THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT is to send up the genre (some people would, do, and have asserted that it is simply bad), but that is nevertheless what it does. There comes a time when we have to meet each story on its own terms, rather than try to fit it into an understanding of the terms of **Doctor Who** as a series. It is not always wise to seek an answer to the question of what anyone intended when they wrote something (if we did then all the scholars would be out of jobs). Divorce the creator from the created and the latter is freed to serve its own function.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT uses the framework of Doctor Who as a vehicle for its own conceit, which is to point up some of the absurdities of that. It takes all the traditional elements and uses them in its own eclectic way, making its own points, the most severe of these being the eponymous Creature. The most probably interpretation within the story is that the Creature's status as sympathetic is merely another trick to con the viewers' expectations. Add to this a further device to frustrate **Doctor Who**'s own conventions - specifically that all aliens speak English - and Fisher is able to keep from viewers the fact that the monster is a goody until the final episode. Because it is unable to communicate, all the Creature's actions thereto appear to be hostile.

That the Creature is not hostile after all is the last and most significant of Fisher's overturnings of expectation, and this time he is attacking the heart of **Doctor Who** itself. As we all know the usual routine is for the Doctor to find either some bad humans oppressing some good humans, or some indifferent humans being molested by an alien whose bad character is presupposed. Variations from this norm are few. Even in THE CURSE OF PELADON there is a mean little sucker to make up for the nice Ice Warriors who are in any case back on form as the terror of Peladon the next time around. So the Doctor always ends up siding with the humans. Rarely is he seen to side with the aliens against the humans and then wipe the latter out. The only plausible comparison is GALAXY



FOUR wherein the nasty-looking Rills turn out to be good guys and the beautiful women turn out to be totally mean and horrible. Now undoubtedly there are those who would choose to interpret this as racism, even if what is really happening is that in this context the slaughter of aliens is fantasy, while the slaughter of humans would be violence - and therefore not on.

Mention of GALAXY FOUR raises a couple of other relevant points. The first of these is that it is not only humans who are the bad guys - but women. This is the second David Fisher story in which the chief villain is a woman: making up a fair proportion of the few **Who**s where this is the case. There are plenty of stories where a bad guy has a female consort (including the previous story - itself based on a Fisher script - CITY OF DEATH). But the solo villainess is a rarity.

In GALAXY FOUR the baddies were inevitably women, since their society was a matriarchy (although, as an interesting aside, this was defined by the casting, not by the initial script). In CREATURE this is not the case. True, Adrasta and her henchperson are women, but other authority figures - the Huntsman and the Guardmaster - are male. It is probably the case that Fisher intended us to see Chloris as matriarchal, but the actual evidence for it being so is thin.

So, is THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT a politically correct story telling us that if we stop trying to kill all these alien monsters we might find that they actually have something valuable to say? That women are quite capable of being independently evil without men to help them? That heroines are perfectly capable of dealing with hairy tribesmen or horrible monsters and don't need men to rescue them? Or that if we give the down-trodden classes half a chance they will demonstrate a potential nobody bothers to credit them with?

No.

Nevertheless, there is some validity in the argument that, intended or not, meanings pertain to the text as time passes by it. So, for example, the episode CONTACT TRACER in the first series of **A Very Peculiar Practice**, where the doctors battle an outbreak of sexually transmitted diseases in the university has new meaning following the advent of AIDS. In particular, the line: "If the sheath ever came back into fashion this would never have happened" takes on a darker resonance. Similarly, listeners' initial understanding of the line in episode nine of The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy about the Berlin Wall is different now to when it was first broadcast in 1980. So in these politically-correct days a sympathetic monster is a social statement - whether intended or not.

More seriously, as the central revelation of the story, and the summation of its objectives, this leaves THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT with the problem of what to do once it has got to this point. And the solution is unsatisfactory.

One of the major problems with **Star Trek** is its reliance on the foundation of mono-characteristic cultures. Kirk and Spock (or Picard and Riker) will walk to the transporter room and one will say to the other: "yes, Captain, it's a very interesting planet. Its economy is entirely dependent on the export of Bonga fruit," or: "It's a mystery how they survive on a planet which is in darkness for ninety per cent of its day." This single characteristic of the planet, its culture and its people, then forms the basis for the entire episode - the whole plot is based around this factor - all situation and precious little plot. THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT is similar: idea - situation - story.

The idea here is to overturn clichés; the situation is a planet with plenty of plants but no metal, and another planet with plenty of metal and no plants; the story runs out at the start of part four - which is why we have all that nonsense with the approaching nutron star suddenly announced out of nowhere. What Fisher should have done is to maintain the integrity of the piece by continuing in the absurd vein that it started. The rot starts as early as the start of the second episode, but in part four there begins a very heavy-handed attempt to make THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT everything it isn't and start telling a serious story.

While the situation within the absurdity may well be a serious one (they are, after all - and perhaps predictably - all going to die, and maybe this should have been explicitly voiced in true Dentian style), the tenor of the storytelling does not lend itself to the caricatures trying to be serious about it. None of this is helped by the fact that the story is, frankly, not only ridiculous but also badly executed - especially the eponymous and central Creature.

The upshot of it all is that the overriding recollection any viewer of THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT retains is a combination of the stupidity of the latter part of the story and the farcical monster. This is a shame as the superb pastiche is completely forgotten in the process. If we ignore the final fifteen minutes, the previous eighty are wonderful and (in the main) wonderfully done. The story is well shot, well paced, superbly lit, and well acted - which in a spoof like this is essential in order to maintain credibility.

In the previous story, CITY OF DEATH, events took place within a recognisably real environment that any gratuitous hamming would have ruined the illusion totally. In CREATURE, the situation is so clearly absurd that it is tempting to suppose that the players are responding not to the attitude of the script but to its awfulness. Tempting, but false. Belying the idea is that Lalla Ward hams it up for the only time in her **Who** career, and it is unlikely she would have refused to take seriously her first story in the role (unless she is attempting to fit lines written for Mary Tamm's pompous Romana into her own lighter interpretation of the character). But she is not the only one. Myra Francis' only **Doctor Who** performance oozes absurdity and extravagance with every syllable. Yet confronted with a line like "I couldn't see a man of your obvious talents in a subordinate position" she knows that the time has come to be serious.

But this is an unusual concession to innuendo. By and large the dialogue is more subtle, and its effectiveness lies not in crudity but in the absurdity and incongruity. In a bizarre alien culture the Doctor meets a couple of very terrestrial academics who have actually written a paper on the subject of the Egg. He then enjoys a series of interchanges about names which, amongst other things, serve to underline the Doctor's point about parity of status between himself and Romana - both are given virtually the same piece of dialogue. When Romana learns that "We call it the Creature" she congratulates Adrasta on her originality. Similarly, Karela tells the Doctor about The Place of Death, and the Doctor congratulates her on her way with words. That no reason is ever given as to why people suffer such a fate is part of the conceit.

There has to be a threat, and a mechanism for drawing the outsiders into the situation. The brilliance of the conceit is that THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT relies on the lack of originality of its premises and the originality of their use. But this particular line of argument is taken no further - which is quite in keeping with the limited **Star Trek** scenario.

There are other nuts to crack - such as the Doctor's apparently endless ability to have just the right things in his pockets when he needs them, or to survive with no particular justification (or explanation) encounters which all others find fatal. But then he is the hero, and heroes tend to be gifted in this way. □

Audience

"WE'RE BACK!" screamed headlines in the relaunched and somewhat hastily assembled *TV Times* for the week commencing October 27th 1979. After more than ten weeks of blank screens the ITV network announced its intention to restart programming that Saturday, having finally settled its pay and manning disputes with the NATKE and ACCT unions.

It was a much thinner *TV Times* than usual, partly due to the speed of its compilation, but partly because nearly all programming that first week would be networked with very little in the way of regional variation. However, recognising they would need to go for immediate impact to combat the BBC's unopposed ten week build-up of audience loyalty, TV Times made great play of all the new autumn programmes that would air during these inaugural seven days.

Pride of place went to a four part series they had virtually poached from the BBC, **Quatermass** (latterly known as ***Quatermass IV*** or ***The Quatermass Conclusion***), a Euston Films production of the four one-hour scripts Nigel Kneale had first offered to the BBC some years earlier. Episode one went out on Wednesday October 31st to good critical reviews.

Also new that week was John Kane's **The Feathered Serpent** on Fridays, a serial for children about the Aztecs starring Patrick Troughton which again drew favourable comments in the Press. Also returning for new seasons were **Minder**, **The Professionals** and **Sapphire and Steel**, the latter broadcasting on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, beginning with repeats of the initial episodes of the *Adventure Two/Railway Station* saga that had been interrupted midway in the summer when the strike first hit.

The Saturday evening ITV line-up did not offer much with which to oppose the Corporation's winning blend of **Doctor Who**, followed by game show, drama, variety, U.S. imported drama, sport and **Parkinson**. They preferred to pin most of their hopes on the novelty value of their first night, plus a screening of the moderately successful Roger Moore movie *Gold*. **Doctor Who** only had to face a two episode compilation of the lukewarm sit-com **Mind Your Language**.

In a way though, the ITV gamble paid off. For that opening night BBC ratings took a big nose-dive from their record highs of previous weeks as people turned over, curious to see what changes might have been wrought after a ten week absence. In later weeks, as the novelty wore off, the pendulum swung back in the BBC's favour.

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT reflects this well. Episode one suffered a plunge to 9.3 million viewers and a drop to

ITV (all regions) SATURDAY 27th OCTOBER 1979

SCP ORT ON	AR TO	NE WS	MIND YOUR LANGUAGE 2 eps.	film GOLD			FREDDIE STARR'S VARIETY MADHOUSE	THE PRO-FESSIONALS		NE WS	film THE LAST DETAIL			
5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00		

BBC 1

SCP ORT ON	AR TO	NE WS	BASIL BRUSH SHOW	DR. WHO Cre. (1)	THE GENERATION GAME		SECRET ARMY	SHIRLEY BASSEY SHOW	STARSKY & HUTCH	NE WS	MATCH OF THE DAY			
5:00	5:30	6:00	6:30	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00		

BBC 2

SNOO-KER	HORIZON rpt	OPEN DOOR	A DIARY OF BRITAIN	SNOOKER		NE WS	THE GREAT LINERS	SOLTI AT THE PROMS		FACE TO FACE	CIRCUIT 11 MIAMI (doc)			

43rd position in the charts. The next week it bounced back to an impressive 10.8 million and was at number 23, before levelling off at position number 36, which it held for both episodes three and four with figures, respectively, of 10.2 and 9.6 million viewers. Put into context this made CREATURE the most successful of Graham Williams' story threes. With an average of 9.9 million, it scores above IMAGE OF THE FENDAHL (7.8m) and THE STONES OF BLOOD (8.0m).

With the return of ITV dominating most of the television coverage in the nation's newspapers, there was little interest in the start of a new Do**ctor Who** four-parter. Only *The Sun* made any real effort, giving two columns on Saturday 27th to an interview with actress Myra Frances (Adrasta) on the perils of walking into a ladies loo at Television Centre whilst still in full costume and silver face make-up. □

Continuity

AT THE START of the story, K-9 is reading *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (by Beatrix Potter) to the Doctor. Romana already knows the story well, and also refers to other Beatrix Potter books. Towards the end of the story, K-9 analyses the situation on tickertape from is mouth (a capability established in THE INVISIBLE ENEMY but not recently used). We also see that his ray beam can be reflected off a mirror.

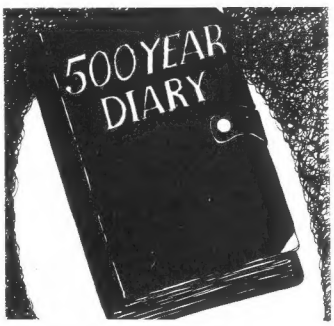
As Romana clears out the hold of the TARDIS, she finds several items of interest. There is a ball of twine given to the Doctor as a thank you from Theseus and Ariadne, for when he helped with the Minotaur (prefiguring THE HORNS OF NIMON).

There is also the jawbone of an ass, the remains of the Beam Machine from THE STONES OF BLOOD, and a Mark III Emergency Transceiver which the Doctor has unplugged because he kept getting calls from Gallifrey on it.

The Doctor's lighter grey coat (from, for example, THE INVISIBLE ENEMY) is hanging on the TARDIS coat stand.

We see that the Doctor has in his pocket, amongst other things, a hammer and pitons as well as two books - *Everest in Easy Stages* (in Tibetan) and *Teach yourself Tibetan*. This implies that the Doctor's grasp of alien and foreign languages does not extend to Tibetan - at least in written form. Later the Doctor produces a circular mirror (in which he reflect K-9's ray beam). When he is exploring the Pit, the Doctor produces several matches. They are not everlasting.

The Doctor wears a stethoscope when he tells Karela: "I'm a doctor". He also comments about Adrasta's desire to see him: "All she had to do was ask for an



appointment".

Romana says that the Doctor claims to be 750 years old.

The Doctor (jokingly?) tells Romana that Time Lords have 90 lives (and that he has got through 130).

Crossed computers are the symbol (and astrological sign!) of the maternity service on Gallifrey, or so the Doctor tells Organon.

The Doctor claims his lucky number is 74,384,338 - which just happens to be the calculation of the odds against his plan working at the end of the story.

K-9 is used most explicitly as a gun in this story - he is picked up a lot by Romana and physically pointed at people. (Sufficient for Adrasta to demand that he is pointed towards the mine walls at one point.) Romana keeps K-9's whistle hidden in her clothes. K-9 recognises the whistle as Romana's. K-9 opens the TARDIS doors by operating something beneath the TARDIS console.

K-9 is programmed to do his best, and not to kill except in self-defence. He is also adamant that he is *not* made of tin. K-9 defers to Romana, unless the Doctor is present, and not to others unless instructed by his master or mistress. He uses a sulky tone when he knows Romana is being coerced to command him to explain about the TARDIS. □

Trivia

THE MATRIARCHY in Adrasta's palace is established enough for Romana to be identified as the "commander" of the TARDIS. Karela says the Doctor is "quite resourceful for a man". Elsewhere on Chloris, however, the matriarchy cannot be so well established: Organon is "seer to princes" in several of the courts on the planet.

The whole planet is covered in impenetrable jungle and forest, which makes cultivation impossible (no tools, because no metal). Metal found on Chloris includes the following (all presumably from Adasta's mine - the only metal mine on the planet, and now completely worked out): cadmium, iron, copper, bronze, tin, silver, zinc.

Erato is a Tythonian - their High Ambassador. He ingests mineral salts and chlorophyll by way of eating His egg-spaceship is metallic and the Doctor can tell it is alive (he uses a stethoscope and a teaspoon to deduce this). It is powered by a photon drive. It looks as though it were woven, and Doran's latest paper on the subject proves conclusively that it is part of an ancient building - perhaps a temple. Erato can spin aluminium. Tythonians can live up to 40,000 years, but Erato has only been on Chloris for fifteen years. The Doctor likens Erato's skin to a cerebral membrane. It is implied that Erato's blood is actually chlorophyll.

The bandits (described in the book as miners) vote for Romana's death with tokens in brass bowls (only one of them votes for her to live.)

The astrological houses mentioned are those in the book, they include Aquatrius, Caprius and Ariel. Organon's birth sign is Pratus, middle cusp.

The lamps in the Pit, presumably left over from when it was a mine, are made from human skulls.

Measurements on Chloris include moonflows, ninods (26 ninods are 1 hour 7 minutes, according to the transmitted programme, although 1 hour 7 seconds is only 3 ninods in David Fisher's novelisation), feet (used by the Doctor and Organon), and years.

The Wolfweeds are specially grown in Lady Adrasta's nurseries and get agitated when they "sense danger." They leave their victims (like K-9) cobwebbed in fibres.

At the end of the story, the Huntsman assumes charge of Chloris and the TARDIS is heard to dematerialise (but is not seen leaving) for adventures new.

After THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT Christopher Barry returned to **All Creatures Great and Small,** after which he went on to do **The Tripods** and episodes of **Juliet Bravo**. He never worked again on **Doctor Who**, not through choice or due to any feedback from CREATURE but purely because he did not figure in John Nathan-Turner's line-up of Directors.

Episode three's ending is one of the few in the programme's history not to feature a threat directed against the Doctor or his companions. Not since part three of THE DAEMONS was the threat against the villain of the story. The episode ends with a slow fade from the screaming Adrasta to a close-up of Erato's communicator-shield. The start of part four is re-edited and contains less material.

At the time this show was screened, Marvel Comics U.K were into the third week of publication with their newest title *Doctor Who Weekly*. □

THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT

Doctor Who Tom Baker
Romana Lalla Ward
Voice of K-9 David Brierley
Adrasta Myra Frances
Organon Geoffrey Bayldon (2-4)
Karela Eileen Way
Torvin John Bryans
Edu Edward Kelsey
Ainu Tim Munro
Guardmaster Tommy Wright (2-3)
Huntsman David Telfer (1,4)
Tollund Morris Barry (1)
Doran Terry Walsh (1)
Guards Philip Denyer (2-3), Dave Redgrave (3)

SMALL & NON-SPEAKING
Stuntmen Terry Walsh (1), Max Faulkner (1)
Engineer *(WO2)* Bobby James (1)
Handmaiden *(WO1)* Gail Hunter (1-2)
Guard No.3 *(WO2)* John Cannon (1-3)
Guard No.4 *(WO1)* Ian Munroe
Guard No.5 *(WO1)* Reg Turner
Guard No.6 *(WO1)* Robert Smythe (1-2)
Guard No.7 *(WO1)* Roy Brent (1-2)
Guard No.8 *(WO1)* Derek Southern (1-3)
Guard No.11 *(WO1)* Ron Nunnery (1-3)
Guard No.12 *(WO1)* Barry Summerfield (1-2)
Bandit No.1 *(WO1)* Billy Gray
Bandit No.2 *(WO1)* Douglas Bather
Bandit No.3 *(WO1)* Nick Joseph (1-2,4)
Bandit No.4 *(WO1)* George Miller (1-2,4)
Bandit No.5 *(WO1)* Laurie Goode (1,3)
Bearer No.1 *(WO1)* Mike Handley (1)
Bearer No.2 *(WO1)* Ridgewell Hawkes (1)
Bearer No.3 *(WO1)* Jerry Judge (1)
Bearer No.4 *(WO1)* Reg Woods (1)
Bearer *(WO1)* Peter Caton
Bearer *(WO1)* Alf Mangan

CREW
Title Music Ron Grainer & the BBC Radiophonic Workshop
Designer Valerie Warrender
Design Assistant David Laskey
Costume Designer June Hudson
Make-up Artist Gillian Thomas
Make-up Assistants Sandra Powell, Janice Sewell, Tina Baker, Sally Milligan, Lisa Pickering
Visual Effects Designer Mat Irvine
Properties Buyer Eric Baker
Production Assistant Romey Allison
Director's Assistant David Tilley
Assistant Floor Manager Carol Snook
Floor Assistant Edward Bye
Fight Arranger Terry Walsh
Film Cameraman David Feig
Film Camera Assistant Tony Bragg
Film Lighting Gaffer Des O'Brien
Film Recordist Doug Mawson
Film Sound Assistant Stuart Moser
Grips George Rose
Film Operations Manager Ian Brindle
Film Editor M.A.C. Adams
Studio Lighting Warwick Fielding
Technical Manager Mike Chislett
Studio Sound Anthony Philpott
Senior Cameraman Rodney Taylor
Crew 3
Vision Mixer James Gould
Electronic Effects Dave Chapman
Videotape Editor Rod Waldron
Show Working Supervisor Chick Hetherington
Special Sound Dick Mills
Incidental Music Dudley Simpson
Writer David Fisher
Production Unit Manager John Nathan-Turner
Script Editor Douglas Adams
Director Christopher Barry
Producer Graham Williams

Season 17, Story 106 (5G) Eps 514 - 517

Part 1: 27 October 1979, 18.02.05 (23'32") 9.3m viewers, 43rd
Part 2: 3 November 1979, 18.07.08 (24' 03") 10.8m viewers, 23rd
Part 3: 10 November 1979, 18.02.02 (23'55") 10.2m viewers, 36th
Part 4: 17 November 1979, 18.03.45 (24' 07") 9.6m viewers, 36th

FILMING
18 March 1979: Setting at Stage 3B, Television Film Studio (Ealing)
19 March 1979: Lighting at Stage 3B, Television Film Studio (Ealing)
20- 23, 26 March 1979: Filming at Stage 3B, Television Film Studio (Ealing)

RECORDING
Studio session 1 (studio TC6)
9 April 1979 - Rehearse 11:00; Rehearse/Record 14:30 - 17:15; Record 19:30 - 22:00
10 April 1979 - Rehearse 10:30; Rehearse/Record 14:30 - 17:15; Record 19:30 - 22:00
Studio session 1 (studio TC6)
22 April 1979 - Rehearse 11:00; Record 19:30 - 22:00
23 April 1979 - Rehearse 10:30; Rehearse/Record 14:30 - 17:15; Record 19:30 - 22:00
24 April 1979 - Rehearse 10:30; Rehearse/Record 14:30 - 17:15; Record 19:30 - 22:00
Gallery only (Electronic Effects in studio TC1)
8 June 1979 - Rehearse/Record 11:00 - 22:00

PROJECT NUMBERS
Part 1: 02349/2711
Part 2: 02349/2712
Part 3: 02349/2713
Part 4: 02349/2714

PROGRAMME NUMBERS
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Part 2: LDLB002A/71/X
Part 3: LDLB003T/72/X
Part 4: LDLB004N/71/X

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Opening Titles 28"
Closing Titles 53"
Specially Shot 9'47"

Part 2:
Opening Titles 28"
Closing Titles 53"
Specially Shot 3'50"

Part 3:
Opening Titles 28"
Closing Titles 53"

Part 4:
Opening Titles 28"
Closing Titles 53"
Specially Shot 1'07" □

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Purple Haze 2
The Sun (27 October 1979)
TV Times (wc 27 October 1979)

FILM
Gold
Oliver
Star Wars (Lucas, 1977)

TELEVISION
All Creatures Great and Small (BBC) Episode: PRIDE OF PASSION
Animal Magic (BBC)
A Very Peculiar Practice (BBC) Episode: CONTACT TRACER
Blake's Seven (BBC 1978-1981) Episode: POWER (5 October 1981)
The Feathered Serpent (ITV, 1979)
Juliet Bravo (BBC)
Minder
Mind Your Language (ITV, 1979)
Parkinson (BBC)
Prince Regent
The Professionals
Quatermass (Euston Films, 1979)
Sapphire and Steel (ATV, 1979-1982)
Star Trek (Paramount/Desilu 1966-1969)
Thirty Minute Theatre
The Tripods (BBC)
Z Cars (BBC)

DOCTOR WHO
The Androids of Tara (5D)
The Brain of Morbius (4K)
City of Death (5H)
The Creature from the Pit (5G)
The Curse of Peladon (MMM)
Destiny of the Daleks (5J)
Galaxy Four (T)
The Horns of Nimon (5L)
Invasion of the Dinosaurs (WWW)
The Invasion of Time (4Z)
The Invisible Enemy (4T)
Robot (4A)
The Seeds of Death (XX)
The Stones of Blood (5C)
The Talons of Weng-Chiang (4S)
Terror of the Autons (EEE)
Terror of the Vervoids (7C)
Terror of the Zygons (4F)

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